

# Wayne Allard

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Contact: Sean Conway  
(202) 224-6207  
Jennifer Pellett  
(202) 224-5936

## SENATE APPROVES ALLARD MEMORIAL AMENDMENT BIPARTISAN VOTE OF 85-13 ALLOWS FOR MEMORIALS'

Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Senate has approved an amendment to the Juvenile Justice Bill (S.254) offered by U.S. Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO) that would allow schools to hold a religious memorial service on school grounds, and permit a memorial that may use religious symbols, motifs or sayings in honor of a student or teacher slain on a school campus. The vote was 85-13 in favor of the Allard Amendment.

“The Senate by an overwhelming majority has said that local communities should have the final say in how they would like to honor the memory of any student or teacher,” Allard said following the vote. “This amendment simply empowers the local community, and does not tamper with the Constitutional separation of church and state.”

In a floor speech to the Senate prior to the vote, Allard read from a letter he had received from the family of Cassie Bernall, one of the victims from the Columbine High School tragedy. The family had written to Allard expressing their support for his amendment.

“My wife Misty and I both believe any Columbine incident memorial should memorialize each individual in a personal way,” wrote Cassie’s father, Brad Bernall. “Everyone knows...that Cassie was a very strong Christian. To leave this facet of her persona would be to mis-memorialize her and others.”

“Why is it that we can speak honestly about sports interests or favorite movies of other slain students in this memorial, but for students like Cassie, we must omit the most important part of her life?” asked Allard after reading the letter from the Bernall family.

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The Allard amendment approved by the Senate allows for two things. The first provision of the amendment says that Congress “finds” that the design and construction of a memorial that is placed on the campus of a public school in order to honor the memory of any person slain on that campus may use religious symbols, motifs or sayings without violating the First Amendment. The second provision states that the saying of a prayer, the reading of a religious passage, or performance of religious music at a memorial service that is held on campus to honor the memory of any person slain at the school does not violate the First Amendment to the Constitution.

In addition, the Allard amendment would allow school districts to seek legal assistance from the Attorney General’s office on any suit filed against the school district for allowing such a memorial service or memorial erected to honor any student or teacher slain.